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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a preliminary report on a bilateral collaborative study recently concluded in the United States and Japan, conducted to determine whether changes in attitudes and behavior occurred in Japanese teenagers participating in one-month homestays in 26 states in the United States. The sample consisted of 426 exchange participants (along with their parents) and 265 control group members (and their parents) who were nominated by the exchange group but who did not travel abroad. Analysis of the data indicated that the overseas homestay experience appeared to be related to the experimental group becoming more sociable, extroverted, responsible, spontaneous, self-confident, informal, independent, competitive, and individualistic when compared with the control group who did not travel abroad. (Author/DB)

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INTERNATIONAL YOUTH EXCHANGES:

MEASURING THEIR IMPACT ON ATTITUDES

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INTERNATIONAL YOUTH EXCHANGES: MEASURING THEIR IMPACT ON ATTITUDES

Abstract

This paper provides a preliminary report on a bilateral collaborative study recently concluded in the U.S. and Japan which was conducted to determine whether changes in attitudes and behavior occurred in Japanese teenagers participating in one-month homestays in 26 states in the U.S. The sample consisted of 426 exchange participants (along with their parents) and 265 control group members (and their parents) who were nominated by the exchange group but who did not travel abroad.

Pre-exchange questionnaires were used to collect demographic information along with a family history of international experiences from both groups of participants and their parents. In addition, prior to the exchange and again after the participants returned home, all youths and their parents responded to a series of 13 pairs of opposite adjectives presented in a semantic differential format (e.g., Flexible/Inflexible; Tolerant/Intolerant). For each adjectival pair, youths were asked to describe themselves on a continuum between the two extremes; parents were asked to use the same adjectives to describe their child. Youth in both the experimental and control groups completed 14 scales of the Japanese language version of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) before and after the exchange.

The Mann-Whitney U-test was used to determine if the attitudes and behaviors of certain overseas subpopulations changed differently. Analysis of covariance will be used to determine if the pretest and posttest responses for the exchange group and control group on the CPI were significantly different.

Analysis of the data indicate that the overseas homestay experience appears to be related to the experimental group becoming more sociable, extroverted, responsible, spontaneous, self-confident, informal, independent, competitive, and individualistic as compared to the control group which did not travel abroad.

Introduction

> We travel together, passengers on a little spaceship, dependent on its vulnerable reserve of air and soil; all committed for our safety to its security and peace; preserved from annihilation only by the care, the work, and I say, the love we give our fragile craft. We cannot maintain it half fortunate, half miserable, half confident, half despairing, half slave--to the ancient enemies of man--half free in the liberation of resources undreamed of until this day. No craft, no crew can travel safely with such vast contradictions. On their resolution depends the survival of us all.

The spaceship earth metaphor is now a commonplace. While he was the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Adlai Stevenson (1) popularized this now oft-quoted plea for development of a global perspective by world citizens.

International travel has long been viewed as one method of introducing such a global perspective into the personal development of young people. Saint Augustine declared that, "The world is a great book of which they who never stir from home read only a page." This maxim and others like it derive from a presumption that young people realize personal development from travel abroad.

Rationale for Exchange Programs

There is an urgent need to educate citizens of all countries to such global perspectives. Every country is rapidly being drawn into a complex global society with an ever greater interdependence among other nations. For instance, in the United States, one out of six manufacturing jobs depends directly upon foreign trade, four out of five new manufacturing jobs result from foreign commerce, and one out of every three acres of farm land produces products for export.

Casual observers may have a tendency to equate overseas exchange programs with recreational excursions experienced by tourists. In the case of tourists, learning is incidental to their recreational experience. They are on vacation.

Student exchange programs, however, are not ations. Participants in most exchanges receive pre-trip orientation, liv ith host families, may attend school, and are provided with support and guidance while abroad. In most exchanges, students are immersed in the host society--trying to learn a new language, experiencing new and different values, and increasing their global understandings and responsibilities (2).

Exchange-sponsoring institutions and organizations, and participants alike claim that international exchange and study abroad programs bring about personal development. Indeed, many optimistic statements have been made about the effects of travel abroad experiences, but in the past, the benefits attributed to participation in international exchanges were explained and defended primarily by means of anecdotal evidence.

Youth Exchange Trends in Japan

In recent years there has been an increasing realization among the Japanese that the future welfare of the country can only be maintained by active participation in the world community. There is widespread recognition that Japan has entered into a new phase of internationalization where it cannot survive in isolation from the rest of the world. Accordingly, a current concern of Japan's educational system is the internationalization of Japanese education. It has become clear that more concerted and system-

atic efforts must be made to inculcate among Japanese youth the importance of global perspectives (3).

To foster increased travel and study abroad, more and more Japanese educational institutions and foundations are engaged in international exchange programs. Partly because of the increased value of the Japanese yen, increasing numbers of Japanese students are choosing to study abroad, prompting several Japanese universities to establish U.S.-based programs. Between 1986 and 1988, the number of Japanese university students studying in the U.S. has risen from 15,000 to 18,000 (4).

Recently, more and more Japanese high school students are choosing to spend one or more years attending high school in the United States. This trend is expected to increase due partly to the Japanese government's recently initiated policy of granting credit for American high school courses. As more Japanese youth study abroad, it will become increasingly important to undertake cooperative investigations to identify problems encountered by such students. In its 1988 Final Communique, the United States-Japan Conference on Cultural and Educational Interchange (CULCON) recommended that a pilot study be conducted to study problems encountered by Japanese students studying in the U.S. and that an assessment of successful secondary school programs be undertaken.

Assessing the Impact of Exchanges

Unfortunately many studies that examine students abroad are responses to perceived operational or membership servicing needs of the sponsoring agencies and therefore are not necessarily of interest to other researchers or practitioners (5). Many such studies confine their interests to the administrative and physical realms of the exchange--for example, quality of accommodations, clarity of written materials, or accuracy of program information.

Rhinesmith (6) says that another difficulty in evaluating many exchange programs is that they do not focus on acquisition of knowledge, but rather on "development of self-confidence and new attitudes"--qualities which are difficult to measure (p. 10). Differences in assessment of outcomes may be due to differences in populations investigated, qualities of personality selected for study, periods of assessment, and, perhaps more importantly, differences in methodology (7).

A U.S. Presidential commission, which met during the late 1970s to examine exchange programs, suggested several reasons for the inadequacy of interchange research to date:

(1) School and higher education personnel who administer exchanges often take on such responsibilities in addition to their regular duties and hence have difficulty finding time to accomodate program requirements, much less evaluation needs.

(2) Many persons predisposed to become involved in exchange activities are unlikely to be qualified to conduct systematic assessment.

(3) International interchange tends to recruit people-oriented persons, not those wont to measure, evaluate, and quantify its impact on people.

(4) Because of the number of subfields in international interchange, the field in general does not tend to produce specialists on the entire field of exchanges; as a result, research is often fragmented (8).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to study whether changes in attitudes and behavior occur in Japanese teenagers participating in one-month homestays abroad. Specifically, the study was designed to determine if the direction and degree of attitude and behavior changes (if any) in youth who participated in homestays were significantly different from members of the control group who stayed at home. The study and its design is significant in that it provided an opportunity to expand and improve on earlier research by one of the co-investigators which examined personality changes in North American teenagers who participated in Japanese homestays (9).

The study was designed not only to contribute to the general body of knowledge about international interchange, but also to learn more about what kinds of youths change in what kinds of ways with regard to personality, and to possibly aid in selecting travel abroad participants and structuring future program elements.

Method

This project was a careful attempt to document personality changes in adolescent Japanese Labo Party members who traveled to the U.S. in 1989 for one-month homestays in 26 U.S. states as part of the 4-H/Labo Exchange.

Labo Party is a Japanese youth organization that offers youth an integrated program of language learning and cultural exploration that culminates in a homestay in the U.S. "Labo" derives from the word "laboratory". Labo Party is administered by the non-profit Labo International Exchange Foundation which is authorized by the Foreign Ministry. The Labo Foundation is based in Tokyo and has offices throughout Japan. Four-H is an informal educational program of each U.S. land-grant university's Cooperative Extension Service.

Participating in the study were 426 Japanese exchange participants (and their parents) from all over Japan and 285 control group members (and their parents) who were nominated by the exchange group but who did not travel abroad. The control group youth and their families were not involved in the Labo organization.

Pre-exchange questionnaires were used to collect demographic information along with a family history of international experiences from both

groups of participants and their parents. With one exception, demographically, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups as a whole, except in categories where differences were expected. By virtue of the Labo organization having an internationally-oriented mission (language teaching and cultural exchange), the experimental group had significantly more experience in hosting international visitors and even reported seeing more foreigners on a daily basis. The Labo members also perceived their own English skills to be superior as compared to the same self-perceptions of the control group (this observation was supported by parents' evaluation of their children's English). Individual family members in Labo families also had significantly more experiences abroad (whether for business, education or pleasure) than the control group family members. The exception was that although youth in both groups view themselves as being academically equal, the parents of Labo members judge their children as being less academically accomplished.

There were some interesting significant differences between demographic subpopulations of the two groups. When examined by sex with regard to school performance, Labo parents perceive their male children to be less academically inclined, but not their female offspring. The same is true of English skills--the Labo parents judge their daughters to be superior in English skills when compared to other youth they know, but not their sons. In addition, parents do not view the English skills of their children who are less than 15 or who have been in Labo less than 7 years as being significantly different than the control group parents judge their children. These two factors seem to go hand-in-hand and appear logical--older children would likely have also been Labo members for a long time, and thus have better English skills.

Likewise, an interesting difference was evident in examining the two youth groups by age in regard to their family travel histories. It appears that for Labo youth less than 15 year old, all members of the family have traveled more than control group family members. But for Labo members 15 years of age and older, it is mothers who have traveled significantly more. Interviews with Labo staff members indicated that Labo membership decreases in the older age cohorts. The data seem to indicate that the youth who <u>join</u> Labo come from families where all members may have histories of overseas travel; the youth who <u>remain</u> Labo members over time come from families where the mother has traveled abroad. This phenomenon may be culturally related to the fact that in most Japanese families, it is the mother who has the most influence on the family's spending patterns and on children's participation in extracurricular activities. Therefore, Labo mothers (who are more likely to have traveled) may see long-term participation in Labo as important for their child.

In addition, prior to the exchange and again after the participants returned home, all youths and their parents responded to a series of 13 pairs of opposite adjectives presented in a semantic differential format (e.g., Flexible/Inflexible; Tolerant/Intolerant). For each adjectival pair, youths were asked to describe themselves on a continuum between the two extremes; parents were asked to use the same adjectives to describe their child (see Appendix A). In addition, the Japanese language version of the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) was administered to both groups

prior to the exchange and once again at its conclusion. Fourteen of the CPI's 18 scales were used. The CPI data still remains to be analyzed.

Labo members and parents completed the pretest questionnaires in person at regional orientation meetings resulting in 77% of all youth and their respective parents completing the requested materials. Control group youth and parents were sent pretest materials by mail resulting in a 69% return rate. Posttests materials were sent to both groups by mail resulting in a 76% return for the experimental group and a 64% return rate for the control group.

Data Analysis

The nonparametric Mann-Whitney U-test was used to determine if the attitudes and behaviors of the two study groups and selected overseas subpopulations changed differently. These analyses have been completed and the results are summarized below.

During the next few months, the pretest and posttest CPI scores for the two groups will be examined statistically using analysis of covariance to determine any significant differences between the two groups as a whole and between any subpopulations of the exchange group.

Results

As noted earlier, there were no significant demographic differences between the two groups as a whole, except as was expected in questions related to international experiences. Some interesting subpopulation differences were also noted.

There were, however, some significant differences between the two groups on the extreme adjective pairs prior to the exchange. The Labo members perceived themselves as significantly different on six of the 13 extreme pairs as compared to the control group's self-ratings. The parents of the Labo members judged their children to be significantly different on six of the 13 extreme adjective pairs as compared to control group parents' appraisals of their own children (three were the same as their children's self-perceptions; three were not). The differences were as follows:

Labo Members

Unsociable (as opposed to Sociable) [P=.0031]
Untrustworthy (as opposed to Trustworthy) [P=.0000]
Deliberate (as opposed to Spontaneous) [P=.0204]
Irresponsible (as opposed to Responsible) [P=.0429]
Flexible (as opposed to Inflexible) [P=.0417]
Insecure (as opposed to Insecure) [P=.0002]

Labo Parents

Direct (as opposed to Indirect) [P=.0005]
Non-competitive (as opposed to Competitive) [P=.0000]
Informal (as opposed to Formal) [P=.0003]
Irresponsible (as opposed to Responsible) [P=.0000]
Flexible (as opposed to Inflexible) [P=.0003]
Insecure (as opposed to Self-confident) [P=.0003]

Following the exchange, Labo members judged themselves to be significantly more Sociable than control members viewed themselves (and Labo parents agreed). This change is just the opposite of views which existed prior to the exchange. With regard to the other five scales on which significant differences were present prior to the exchange, Labo members had moved in the opposite directions, so much so that the significant differences no longer were present. One new significant difference came to light following the exchange: the Labo members viewed themselves as more Extroverted compared to the self-judgments of control group members.

As noted, following the exchange, Labo parents no longer perceived their children to be less Sociable than control parents; instead, they judged their children to be significantly more Sociable than control parents viewed their own children. The same reversal was true of the Insecure vs. Self-Confident scale. After the homestays, Labo parents thought of their children as being significantly more Self-confident as compared with the control parents views.

After the exchange, Labo parents judged their children to have become even more Informal than they were prior to traveling abroad. Two new significant differences appeared following the exchange--Labo parents thought their children to be significantly more Individualistic and Independent.

Although Labo parents viewed their children as Non-competitive before traveling to the U.S., they viewed them in an opposite light after their return to Japan. The post-exchange significant differences can be summarized as follows:

Labo Members

Sociable (as opposed to Unsociable) [P=.0395]
Extroverted (as opposed to Introverted) [P=.0229]

Labo Parents

Sociable (as opposed to Unsociable) [P=.0185]
Self-confident (as opposed to Insecure) [P=.0169]
Competitive (as opposed to Non-competitive) [P=.0429]
Informal (as opposed to Formal) [P=.0005]
Individualistic (as opposed to Group-oriented) [P=.0430]
Independent (as opposed to Dependent) [P=.0211]

Conclusions

Typically, a researcher hopes to begin such a study with two well-matched groups with no significant differences. Although this was generally the case with the demographics, it was not the case on the 13 extreme adjective scales.

The Labo experimental group was not equivalent to the control group on several of the scales at the time of the pretest. In general, the pretest adjective scale data, when viewed in light of Japanese culture and society, paint a picture of youth who are less Sociable, not as Responsible, less Trustworthy, and more Insecure than the control group members.

But after a thorough examination of the posttest data, it is clear these Labo youth who may have been somewhat different prior to the exchange, come back to Japan having either caught up with or surpassed the control group members on the scales where differences formerly existed. The exchange experience appears to be related to the Labo group becoming more Sociable, Extroverted, Responsible, Spontaneous, Self-Confident, Individualistic, Informal, Competitive, and Independent.

Considering Labo's mission and objectives, it also makes sense that the Labo organization might attract young people whose parents perceive them to be deficient in one or more ways with regard to behavior and/or personality--parents who encourage their children to join Labo so that they might gain personal development skills as well as international competencies and experience, in much the same way that a parent might encourage an awkward child to enroll in gymnastics.

Additional research would be required to fully explore this line of reasoning, but even if it is somewhat accurate, then the reasons young people join (and remain enrolled in) Labo seems to be related to its stated mission and objectives.

This research and a number of other recently completed studies document that exchange participants show greater personal growth than similar youth who do not have the opportunity to travel abroad. Experiences abroad present unfamiliar challenges that require individuals to develop and assimilate new behavioral responses. These new responses bring about progression through the sequential stages of personal development. Thus, immersion in a foreign culture provides a touchstone against which returned travelers can view their own society and the values that shape their lives.

The Challenge Ahead

Those of us involved in educating young people, whether formally in schools or informally through youth organizations, have an opportunity and a responsibility to provide leadership in international education. It is up to educators to help students at all levels develop the skills, attitudes, and knowledge required to be literate in a global society.

International youth exchange should be promoted and should receive

additional funding through government agencies. Likewise, there is need for a dramatic shift in emphasis within exchange administering organizations so that research related to the consequences of international interchange will receive greater priority.

Educators must also develop and employ teaching strategies which extend international education efforts beyond youth exchange activities in order to reach the vast majority of young people who may never have the opportunity to travel abroad. From an early age, young people must be exposed to intellectual and social experiences that will facilitate the growth of world consciousness needed by citizens in an increasingly global society. This will require improving the content and methods of teaching and research, and introducing international studies programs in each discipline of the social sciences and the humanities curricula.

The challenges of global education are great. Philosopher and futurist R. Buckminster Fuller (9) conveyed the sense of urgency facing citizens of spaceship earth:

> We're at a point now where we have one spaceship earth, and the only way you can possibly run it is on behalf of everybody. The way it is now we have 150 admirals--the 150 nations of the world--and the admirals who happen to have the stateroom on board that's nearest the dining room of the ship say that they own all the food; and the admirals near the dynamo claim all the electricity; and the admirals near the light bulbs claim all the light. But nobody's paying any attention to where the ship's going! All of them are fighting over the ship, and it's going nowhere. We are going to have to look at our planet as a total ship: the resources are where they are most logically positionable by nature, but they belong to everybody (p. 42).

Whether it is out of a sense of impending disaster or a sense of courage, educators must begin taking leadership for helping young people develop the skills needed for global citizenship on this planet. As Fuller aptly noted: "The most important fact about Spaceship Earth: an instruction book didn't come with it."

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APPENDIX A

* Below is a series of adjectives that people sometimes use to describe one another. Using the scale, please circle the one number which, in your opinion, most closely describes YOU. Please respond to each item, but do not spend more than 10 seconds to make a decision on any one item.

SOCIABLE	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	UNSOCIABLE
TRUSTWORTHY	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	UNTRUSTWORTHY
NARROW-MINDED	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	BROAD-MINDED
SPONTANEOUS	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	DELIBERATE
INDIRECT	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	DIRECT
INTROVERTED	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	EXTROVERTED
STRONG SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	WEAK SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY
COMPETITIVE	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	NON-COMPETITIVE
DEPENDENT	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	INDEPENDENT
INFLEXIBLE	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	FLEXIBLE
FORMAL	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	INFORMAL
GROUP-ORIENTED	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	INDIVIDUALISTIC
SELF-CONFIDENT	3	2	1	0	1	2	3	INSECURE